

AN ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION, HOW FARRE IT IS LAWFULL TO FLEE IN THE TIME OF THE PLAGVE;

Extracted out of a Sermon preached in Alderman-bury, by THOMAS TAYLOR.

PROVERBS XXII. III. *And hides himselfe.*

Quest. May a man, to hide himselfe from the Plague, forsake his place, his calling, and remove himselfe and his?

Ans. M. Calvin answereth this question in one of his Epistles thus: A question riseth from the stupiditie of men without sense of humanitie, Whether wee may not avoyd the Plague? They would have no man change aire, nor avoid contagious and poysoned places, nor delight in any pleasing prospect, &c. *Facessant paradoxa huiusmodi, quorum usus est nos exuere omni sensu.* But, this answer being too short for such as desire to walke by rule, wee must consider, first, the persons; secondly, the reasons; thirdly, the cautions; fourthly, the objections.

First, publick persons, whom, by vertue of their speciall calling, the Church, or Common-wealth, or the Familie, cannot want, may not flee, unlesse they by others may competently supply their owne absence.

But private persons, whose Calling the Publick may for a time want, may avoid the danger: for,

Reason 1. First, all manifest perils ought to be avoided, if without impietie wee can shun them. It is lawfull to avoid an arrow coming upon us; and not to avoid it if we can, makes us accessory to our owne death. But this is an arrow coming on us, and by good meanes to be avoided: it cannot be lesse lawfull, than to avoid fire, or sword, or poyson.

Secondly, God hath given us speciall commandement for the care & preservation of our own lives, & to use al good meanes of preservation, & hath sanctified preservatives & physick to this purpose. He that hath charged us with the care of our brethrens lives, much more hath charged us without owne.

Reason 3. Thirdly, David used many caves and hiding places: in a short time he fled from Saul into twelve severall hiding places, To King Achis, to the King of Moab, and to the King of the Philistines, into the cave of Adullam, the Grove of Hareth, the Desert of Ziph, of Maon, of Engedi, of Paran, &c. Yea, Christ and his Disciples fled oftentimes from danger: and why not we till our house also be come, that in the meane time we may be the more serviceable to God and his Church? Nay, God himselfe bids Elias goe flee and hide himselfe from persecution by the Brook Cherith. He could have kept him safe from Ahab and Iezabel without his fleeing, in the midst of them; but he teacheth us what godly men may doe in the like cases.

Ob. But this is to avoid the sword of man; but speaketh not of the Plague, the hand and sword of God.

Ans. What wee may pray the removall of, we may lawfully avoid: but David prayed the removall of the plague, 2 Sam. 24. 1 Kings 8. *If thou send a Plague and pestilence, and thy people pray in this house, then heare out of heaven, &c.* So Aaron prayed, and stood between the living and dead, and the plague ceased.

Reason 4. The fruit of faith is the use of such meanes, as which God hath appointed for the effecting of his own decrees; & the more faith, the more use of means: whereof this is one, Not to converse with the infected, and to depart from the infected place so far as *salva conscientia & charitate* wee may. Paul beleevved none should perish in the ship, according to the word of God, yet must they not be saved unlesse they abide in the ship: for there must be shipmen to guide and governe the ship to land, as it came to passe.

Thirdly, the cautions or conditions in fleeing the Plague.

Cautiō 1. First, see no prophanenesse be in the flight, or impietie, as if we would or could avoid the hand of God: we must not intend to flee from God; for whether shall we flee from his presence? but first flee unto God. For as we must not neglect the means of our safetie: so we must not trust in them, but in Gods blessing, who must watch and hide, or else all comes to nought.

Cautiō 2. Before thou avoid the effect of Gods anger, see thou avoid the cause of it, and that is thine own sin: else can no dens, castles, or caves hide thee. *Iohn Baptist* witheth men, by fleeing the cause, to flee wrath to come: otherwise, *A-maziah* flees to Lachish; but death flees after him, and overtakes him, because he fled not from sin the cause of his misery. For it is not change of place, but of minde; not of bodies, but vices, which is the true refuge and sanctuary. In returning consider, that faith and repentance must be your rest. No, say they, we will flee upon horses. Yea, but your enemies horses shall be swifter than yours: no flight swift enough to save him that will carry his sinnes with him. The first step in fleeing, must be to flee thy selfe.

Cautiō 3. In fleeing from infection, be sure thou beest as beneficiall absent as present, in things spirituall, temporall. 1. Faile not by sound humilitie and godly sorrow to bewaile thy sins, which have provoked the wrath of God, and aswell absent as present seek to appease God, and avert his stroke from thy selfe and others. Even absent thou must put thy selfe into their misery, as one that hath provoked that displeasure. 2. Omit no dutie of charitie and beneficence: if thy person be removed, leave thy purse behinde thee, & thy best help, as one that knowest thou art not loosed from the common law of neighbourhood; but art charged still to see no needfull thing wanting to the poore and needy, whether sick or sound.

Cautiō 4. In fleeing looke to thine affections, that no excessive feare of death moove thee: for thou must still keep a desire to be dissolved, and stand as *Sarah* in the doore of the Tent to entertain that messenger, and be ready for death whensoever the houre is come: nor yet incredulitie or weaknesse of faith force thee. But let faith lead thee forth, and let it be no loser. *Noah* by faith went into the Ark, and staid, yea, till God led him out.

Ob. 1. The plague is not contagious, nor comes from man; but an immediate hand of God, and so is not to be avoyded.

Ans. 1. It follows not, because it is the hand of God, that it is not contagious. Was not the leprosie a rod & scourge of God? and yet was it not infectious?

2. It follows not, because it is the hand of God, wee must not use lawfull meanes to avoid it: for so is famine, sword, fire, warre, the hand of God; and yet who can deny we may use lawfull meanes to avoid them all? Beside, it was the law of God most carefully to avoid the Leprosie, and not to come neere persons infected: and why not the plague or other contagious diseases? *Balaams* Ass, seeing the drawne sword of the Angell, will shun it.

Ob. 2. But none can resist the providence of God. Hee hath numbered whom he will smite with the plague, and who shall not be touched: and none of them who are so touched, shall escape.

causes, but stablisheth them, because he stablisheth and executeth his decrees by means and second causes: and it were a tempting of God, to refuse the lawfull and allowed meanes of preserving life, by which God ordinarily saveth whom he will save.

2. God indeed knows how many shall be smitten: and if we knew the secret will of God concerning our selves, then were our wils to be surrendered to Gods will: and an heart affected with Gods glory, will be readier for death than life, if God reveale to it, that to die is better than to live. But not knowing this, we are not loosed from the use of lawfull means for the preservation of our lives, till we see our houre to be come.

3. God knows and hath decreed how many shall fall by the sword in war, and yet who will say it is unlawfull to use weapons to defend our selves, and fight for our lives? So God knows how many shall fall by famine, in time of dearth and scarcity: but is it therefore unlawfull to buy food to preserve our lives? Did not he command *Jacob* to goe and buy food in Egypt, whom he could have preserved without meanes, but would not, because meanes were then, though far off.

But the plague is good to the good, so not to be avoided.

It is not simply good neither. It is not good in it selfe, nor as a cause; but as an occasion of humilitie, repentance, feare of God: neither is it so, but by the work of the Spirit. But it will not follow, that it is not to be avoided. For our sins are occasionally good to humble us, and work in us feare of God, and yet are to be avoided. So all miseries are turned to good to the good, but yet wee may lawfully avoid them.

But we have callings in which we must abide, and we have promise of protection while we are in our way, and therefore must not avoid them.

We must abide in our callings, unlesse we be necessarily thrust out: but this is no willing desertion, but a suspending of the exercise of it for a greater and higher reason. For if for some occasions a man may leave his calling many moneths, as for health, profit, pleasure; much more to save his life.

2. We have promises to be kept in our way: but promises make not men slothfull, nor foolishly rash and temerarious, to thrust themselves into probable and certain danger; for that is not our way.

But charity seeks not her own, but Gods, the Churches, and our neighbors: and by our flight or feare our brother may not perish for whom Christ dyed.

1. Charity seeks not it selfe wholly or onely, but yet destroyes not it selfe. Ordinarie charity, in saving himselfe, seeketh Gods glorie, and the Churches good, and not himselfe onely.

2. Charity so respecteth the sick, as the sound be not neglected: to comfort one, we may not hazard many; nor so look forth, as forgetting our own home.

3. Charity seeks the good of severall persons, but so as it prefers the safetie of the Univerfall. That is inordinate charity, when other good meanes may be used for the comfort of the afflicted: a man casts himself into manifest danger, and with himselfe, his family, if he be private, and the Church and Common-wealth, if he be publick.

This question was excellently beaten out between *Zanchius* and a godly pastor named *Curienfis*. This pastor held it unlawfull to separate from the infected, or to leave the places infected; and commended M. *Bullinger*, who being sent for by a woman infected, went to her, and brought home the infection into his family, and presently lost his wife and two daughters. Now M. *Zanchius* commended the charitie of M. *Bullinger*, but did not altogether approve his fact, because the woman might have been otherwise comforted, than by his going to her bed side, and setteth downe some directions, after long debating. That good pastor, being too venturous, was taken with the plague; and when he was neare death, cried out, *O utinam Zanchij consilium secutus essem*, Would to God I had followed M. *Zanchius* his counsell.

But is every prudent man hid from the evill, as this Text seemeth to say? Come not all things alike to all men? Doth not judgement begin sometimes at the house of God? and are not the godly wrapped sometimes in the common danger of sword, fire, plague? and who more afflicted than they?

Godly men suffer evill with wicked men (for *Abraham* and *Jacob* are in the famine with the Canaanites. The good Israelites as well as the bad are under the oppressions of the Egyptians. *Caleb* and *Ioshua* bare the sinne of Israel forty years with the murmurers. *Elias* was afflicted in the hard times procured by *Ahab* and *Iezabel*;) but are ever hid. For,

1. Distinguish of punishments. Some are revenges; some, remedies, exercises of grace, vertues keepers, as *Aquinas* calleth them. The prudent are ever hid from the former: but it were not good to be free from the latter.

2. Distinguish of persons punished. Some are vessels of wrath, to whom even benefits are plagues: some are vessels of mercy, to whom all evils work to good. These are ever so far hid, as that the Lord never hides his face from them, but for a moment, but that to imbrace them with everlasting compassion.

3. Distinguish the manner of hiding. The prudent cannot so hide himselfe, as to be free from feeling of trouble: but he is freed so, as that he shall not fall in them; or if he fall, God puts under his hand for a seasonable deliverance. But how are they that are slain with the sword, or dy of the plague, delivered?

Many are the troubles of the godly, and great: but the Lord delivers them out of all. But deliverance is threefold.

1. Some are delivered temporally, that others may see and praise Gods goodness, as *Daniel* from the den, the three children from fire, *Ezechias* from the plague, that fathers might tell their children, &c.

2. Some proportionally; not by pulling them out of danger, but by pulling out the sting, and whatsoever is hurtfull, and arming them with strength, patience, and sufficient grace, that in darknesse they see light.

3. Some he delivereth eternally from danger, by suffering them to be overcome, and taken away by sword, plague, &c. and dealeth with his vessels of honour, as we with ours: which when we would scourge the brightest, we oyle, and soile, and soule them, as if they would never be cleane again. And as with his naturall Son: he will not remove the cup till he have drinke the last drop. Yet he leaves them not comfortlesse, but gives them by death freedom, and victory over death and deadly things, that when they are from the world, they may be welcome, but more than Comforters. And so of others.

Ob. 3.
Ans.

Ob. 4.
Ans.

Ob. 5.
Ans.

Quest.

Ans.

Quest.
Ans.